

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 03810 01 OF 02 181322Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05
IO-13 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 SSM-03 /078 W
-----181353Z 131051 /43

R 181030Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3551
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF
USCINCEUR
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 3810

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, SOPN, SY, LE
SUBJECT: SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR LEBANESE NATIONAL FRONT

1. SUMMARY: RECENTLY, SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE BEEN PUBLICIZING EFFORTS LED BY KAMAL SHATILA AND ASSAM QANSU, AND SUPPORTED BY SYRIAN BAATHIST ABDULLAH AL-AHMAR TO CREATE NATIONAL FRONT IN LEBANON. EARLY PHASE OF LAYING FOUNDATION FOR FRONT CULMINATED JUNE 16 WITH UNVEILING OF FRONT PLATFORM, WHICH GENERALLY APPEALS FOR ABOLITION OF SECTARIANISM IN LEBANON, CONTINUED SYRO-LEBANESE COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION OF LEBANON WITH SYRIA IN EASTERN FRONT AGAINST ISRAEL. ONE INFORMED LOCAL SOURCE DISPARAGED EFFORTS BY SHATILA, QANSU AND AHMAR TO ATTRACT SUBSTANTIAL LEBANESE POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR FRONT. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 03810 01 OF 02 181322Z

FRONT HAS ONLY MANAGED TO CREATE APPEARANCE OF INCREASING MOMENTUM THROUGH ORCHESTRATED EFFORTS OF SYRIAN MEDIA. END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE RECENTLY BEEN ACCORDING PROMINENT COVERAGE TO QUICKENING EFFORTS BY LEBANESE NASSERITE LEADER KAMAL SHATILA AND LEBANESE BAATHIST ASSAM QANSU TO KNIT TOGETHER

BROAD NATIONAL FRONT COMPOSED OF MODERATE MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN FACTIONS. ON JUNE 4, SHATILA TOLD LOCAL AL-THAWRA THAT ANY LEBANESE POLITICAL GROUP COULD PARTICIPATE IN FRONT AS LONG AS IT WAS COMMITTED TO "UNITY AND ARABISM OF LEBANON IN WORD AND DEED," A PHRASE WHICH HAS BECOME MOTTO OF PROPOSED FRONT. NEXT DAY, PRESS NOTED THAT DIALOGUE AMONG LEBANESE GROUPS OVER ESTABLISHMENT OF FRONT "ENJOYS PRIORITY OVER ALL OTHER ISSUES." ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT CONSIDERABLE HEADWAY HAD BEEN MADE AS RESULT OF MEETINGS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF EMBRYO FRONT AND OTHER LEBANESE LEADERS, AND AS RESULT OF TALKS BETWEEN BAATH PARTY DEPSEC GEN ABDULLAH AL-AHMAR AND LEBANESE POLITICIANS. ARTICLE CITED MENA REPORT THAT FRONT MAY BE PROCLAIMED IN EARLY JULY.

3. JUNE 7 PRESS SUGGESTED THAT CREATED OF FRONT BEGINNING TO GATHER MOMENTUM. PRESS REPORTED THAT CONFRONTATION FRONT BELONGING TO TALAL MIRABI HAD REQUESTED TO JOIN WITH SHATILA AND QANSU, AND THAT REQUEST WAS ACCEPTED. COLUMNIST NOTED THAT IDEA OF ESTABLISHING FRONT HAD "BECOME AN ACTUAL FACT," AND THAT ITS ESTABLISHMENT MIGHT REQUIRE ONLY LITTLE MORE TIME. NEXT DAY, PRESS CITED STATEMENT BY FORMER PRIMIN KARAME SUPPORTING CREATION OF NATIONAL FRONT.

4. AT THIS POINT ORCHESTRATION OF FRONT EFFORTS WAS TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED TO FOCUS ON FONMIN KHADDAM'S VISIT TO BEIRUT, RENEWED ATTEMPT TO FORGE AGREEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS, AND LEBANESE "CELEBRATION" -- EXPRESSED BY PRESENTATION OF BOUQUETS OF FLOWERS -- MARKING ONE YEAR OF ENTRY OF SYRIAN FORCES TO CONSOLIDATE SECURITY AND STABILITY IN LEBANON. MEDIA AGAIN PICKED UP THREAD OF FRONT ACTIVITIES COUPLE DAYS LATER, NOTING THAT CON-

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 03810 01 OF 02 181322Z

FRONTATION FRONT HEADED BY MIRABI HAD ENDORSED IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS. THEN, ON JUNE 11, PRESS REPORTED MEETING BETWEEN QANSU AND WALID JUMBLATT TO DISCUSS WAYS TO REACH GREATER LEVEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO PARTIES. LEBANESE UNITY DAY CELEBRATIONS AFFORDED FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE FRONT, AND WERE ACCOMPANIED BY APPROPRIATE HEADLINES: "COMMUNIQUE OF FRONT OF PAN-ARAB AND NATIONAL PARTIES AND FRONTS MARKING FESTIVAL OF LEBANESE UNITY DAY. LEBANON'S STABILITY COMES ABOUT ONLY WITH RETURN OF ITS UNITY AND NON-SECTARIAN ARAB IDENTITY. LEBANESE CALL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF EXPANDED NATIONAL FRONT. LEBANON'S UNITY AND CONSOLIDATION OF ITS ARABISM IS A FUNDAMENTAL PRELUDE TO COMPROMISE."

5. JUNE 14 PRESS REPORTED THAT SHATILA'S GROUP WAS STUDYING POLITICAL WORKING PAPER WHICH WOULD BECOME BASIS FOR NATIONAL FRONT. FULL DETAILS OF PAPER WERE UNVEILED AT JUNE 16 PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY SHATILA AND ATTENDED BY QANSU, WHICH RECEIVED HEADLINE TREATMENT IN JUNE 17 PRESS. CLAIMING THAT LEBANESE CRISIS HAS RENDERED FOREIGN GUARANTEES FOR LEBANON "OBSOLETE."

SHATILA ASSERTED THAT LEBANESE STABILITY COULD ONLY BE ENSURED BY
"POPULAR NATIONAL UNITY AND HIGHEST DEGREE OF COORDINATION WITH
SYRIA." HE CALLED FOR APPROACH TO PROBLEMS IN SOUTH LEBANON IN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 03810 02 OF 02 181337Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05
IO-13 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 SSM-03 /078 W
-----181352Z 000052 /40

R 181030Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3552
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF
USCINCEUR
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DAMASCUS 3810

RESPONSIBLE MANNER BY JOINT LEBANESE, PALESTINIAN, AND ARAB
EFFORTS. HE OUTLINED FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES AS GUIDELINES FOR
LEBANESE UNITY: A) ELIMINATION OF ALL SECTARIAN POWER CENTERS,
INCLUDING ARMED MILITIAS, PRIVATE RADIO STATIONS, PRIVATE AIR-
PORTS AND SEAPORTS, AND SECESSIONIST EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL
INSTITUTIONS; B) EXPANSION OF OFFICIAL AUTHORITY TO ALL LEBAN-
ESE TERRITORY, TO BE ACHIEVED BY ABOLISHING IRREGULAR MILITARY
FORCES, REBUILDING ARMY AND INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES "ON BASIS
OF AN INTEGRATED DEFENSE PLAN WITH EASTERN ARAB STATES," CHARG-
ING LEBANESE ARMED FORCES TO MAINTAIN SECURITY IN SOUTH LEBANON
WITH ADF ASSISTANCE, AND IMPLEMENTING AGREEMENTS CONCLUDED
BETWEEN LEBANON AND PLO: C) ENABLING LEGITIMATE AUTHORITIES
TO EXERCISE THEIR POWERS IN FIELDS OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL
SECURITY, INFORMATION GUIDANCE, EDUCATION AND CULTURE, AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 03810 02 OF 02 181337Z

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: D) REJECTION OF POLITICAL ENTITIES ESTABLISHED ON CONFESSIONAL OR LOCAL BASIS; E) RESOLUTION OF ISSUE OF DISPLACED PERSONS. REGARDING LEBANESE POLICY WITH ARAB WORLD, SHATILA CALLED FOR: A) COORDINATING DEFENSE AND SECURITY MATTERS WITH SYRIA AIMED ULTIMATELY AT SYRO-LEBANESE COLLABORATION IN CONSTRUCTING EASTERN FRONT AGAINST ISRAEL, AND B) IMPOSING NO RESTRICTIONS ON PARTICIPATION OF ARAB FORCES -- IN PARTICULAR SYRIAN FORCES -- TO PROTECT LEBANON WHEN REQUIRED WITHIN CONTEXT OF EASTERN FRONT STRATEGY. FINALLY, SHATILA STATED HIS VIEW OF BASIC POINTS FOR LEBANESE DEVELOPMENT: A) ABOLITION OF POLITICAL SECTARIANISM, B) MODERNIZATION OF PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM, AND C) ADOPTION OF PRINCIPLE OF EXPANDING PUBLIC SECTOR IN SOME ECONOMIC SPHERES AND GRANTING STATE THE RIGHT TO EXERCISE ECONOMIC GUIDANCE.

6. WELL-INFORMED LOCAL CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS LEADER TOLD US THAT HE SEES LITTLE HOPE FOR SUCCESSFUL EXPANSION OF SHATILAQANSU NATIONAL FRONT. IN HIS VIEW - AND HE MEETS REGULARLY WITH SYRIAN OFFICIALS WHO IMPLEMENT SARG POLICY IN LEBANON AS WELL AS WITH LEBANESE POLITICAL FIGURES - SHATILA HAS FAILED TO ATTRACT ANY PROMINENT LEBANESE POLITICIANS TO HIS FRONT BECAUSE HE IS SEEN BY SALAM, KARAME AND OTHERS AS INSIGNIFICANT FIGURE WITH WHOM "AUTHENTIC" LEBANESE LEADERS RELUCTANT TO DEAL. HE NOTED THAT KARAME HAD PUBLICLY SUPPORTED CREATION OF FRONT, BUT OF COURSE HAD NOT YET JOINED IT, "AND PROBABLY WILL NOT." PRES. AL-ASSAD, HOWEVER, FEELS SOME DEGREE OF LOYALTY TO SHATILA BECAUSE LATTER HAS SUPPORTED SYRIA DURING SOME DARK DAYS IN LEBANON, AND HAS CHOSEN HIM AS A KEY LEBANESE POINT MAN FOR SYRIA. REGARDING AHMAR, LEBANESE MUSLIMS ARE TOO PROUD TO HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH HIM, SOURCE SAID. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO MEET WITH ALAASSAD, BUT HAVE LITTLE RESPECT FOR AHMAR. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT AHMAR APPEALING TO GROUPS WHICH ARE ALSO BEING WOODED BY SONS OF TRADITIONAL LEBANESE POLITICIANS; THIS HAS LED TO SOME TENSION BETWEEN THEM AND AHMAR. IN SUM, HE SUGGESTED THAT SO FAR THE CONCEPT OF A LEBANESE NATIONAL FRONT HAS ONLY MADE HEADWAY IN SYRIAN MEDIA.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 03810 02 OF 02 181337Z

7. COMMENT: WE AGREE THAT, VIEWED FROM DAMASCUS, NATIONAL FRONT CURRENTLY HAS MORE VITALITY IN SYRIA MEDIA THAN AMONG SERIOUS LEBANESE POLITICIANS. HOWEVER, ANNOUNCEMENT OF PRINCIPLES GUIDING FURTHER EXPANSION OF FRONT INDICATES THAT SARG HAS NOT YET GIVEN UP ON FRONT CONCEPT AS INSTRUMENT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON. PRINCIPLES CONSTITUTE FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE OUTLINE OF DIRECTION IN WHICH SYRIA

HOPES TO SEE LEBANESE MILITARY, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EFFORTS
MOVE. WE WERE PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY REFERENCE TO LEBANON'S
PARTICIPATION IN EASTERN FRONT. SHATILA'S PROGRAM, JUDGING
FROM REFERENCES TO PUBLIC SECTOR, CONTAINS SOME SUBSTANTIAL
BAATHIST INPUT, ALTHOUGH THIS IS ALSO STANDARD SOCIALIST
PLANK. IN ANY CASE. SHATILA AND QANSU HAVE NOW FULLY ARTICU-
LATED THE GOALS THEY SHARE WITH SYRIA IN LEBANON, BUT IT
REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT LEBANESE SUPPORT THEY CAN RALLY TO
THEIR COLORS.
PELLETREAU

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LIBERATION FRONTS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC03810
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770218-1039
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770643/aaaabldu.tel
Line Count: 234
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6a6f827a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2105101
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR LEBANESE NATIONAL FRONT
TAGS: PGOV, SOPN, SY, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6a6f827a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009